



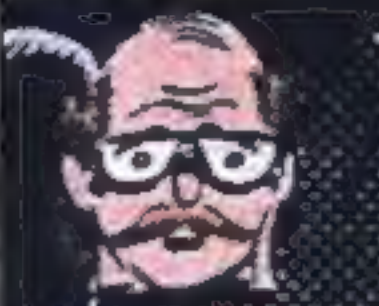




STAN LEE, PUBLISHER



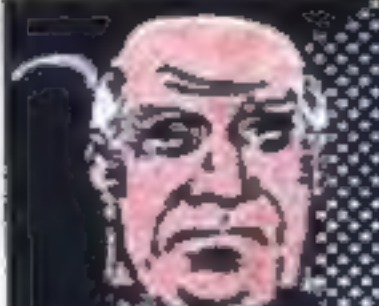
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JIM SHOOTER, CHIEF

# THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN RELAPSE TIMES TWO!

WITHIN THE LITTLE MASQUERADE SHOP, THE DARKNESS IS SO DENSE, THE SILENCE SO PALPABLE, IT SEEMS AS IF NOTHING COULD PENETRATE IT...

KAROW!  
POW!  
TIME  
PROPRIETOR



NOTHING, THAT IS, SAVE THE SOUND OF GUNSHOTS!

PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN™ Vol. 1, No. 77, April, 1983, (ISSN 0273-6632) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Busch, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Vice-President, Publishing, Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production, OFFICE OF PUBLICATION, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Second Class postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. Published monthly. Copyright © 1983 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 60¢ per copy in the U.S. and 75¢ in Canada. Subscription rate \$7.20 for 12 issues. Canada and Foreign, \$9.20. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. Postmaster: Send address changes to Subscription Dept., Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.



STILL, NOTHING SEEMS TO STIR, NONE OF THE FIGURES  
MOVE A MUSCLE.



UNTIL...



THAT WAS  
GUNFIRE.



# COSTUMES

MELVIN POTTER, PROPRIETOR

NEARBY.



BUT THAT'S NONE  
OF MY BUSINESS.

WRONG,  
MELVIN...









# COSTUMES









ELSEWHERE, AT THAT EXACT MOMENT, DOCTOR OTTO OCTAVIUS MAKES HIS SELF-APPOINTED ROUNDS.

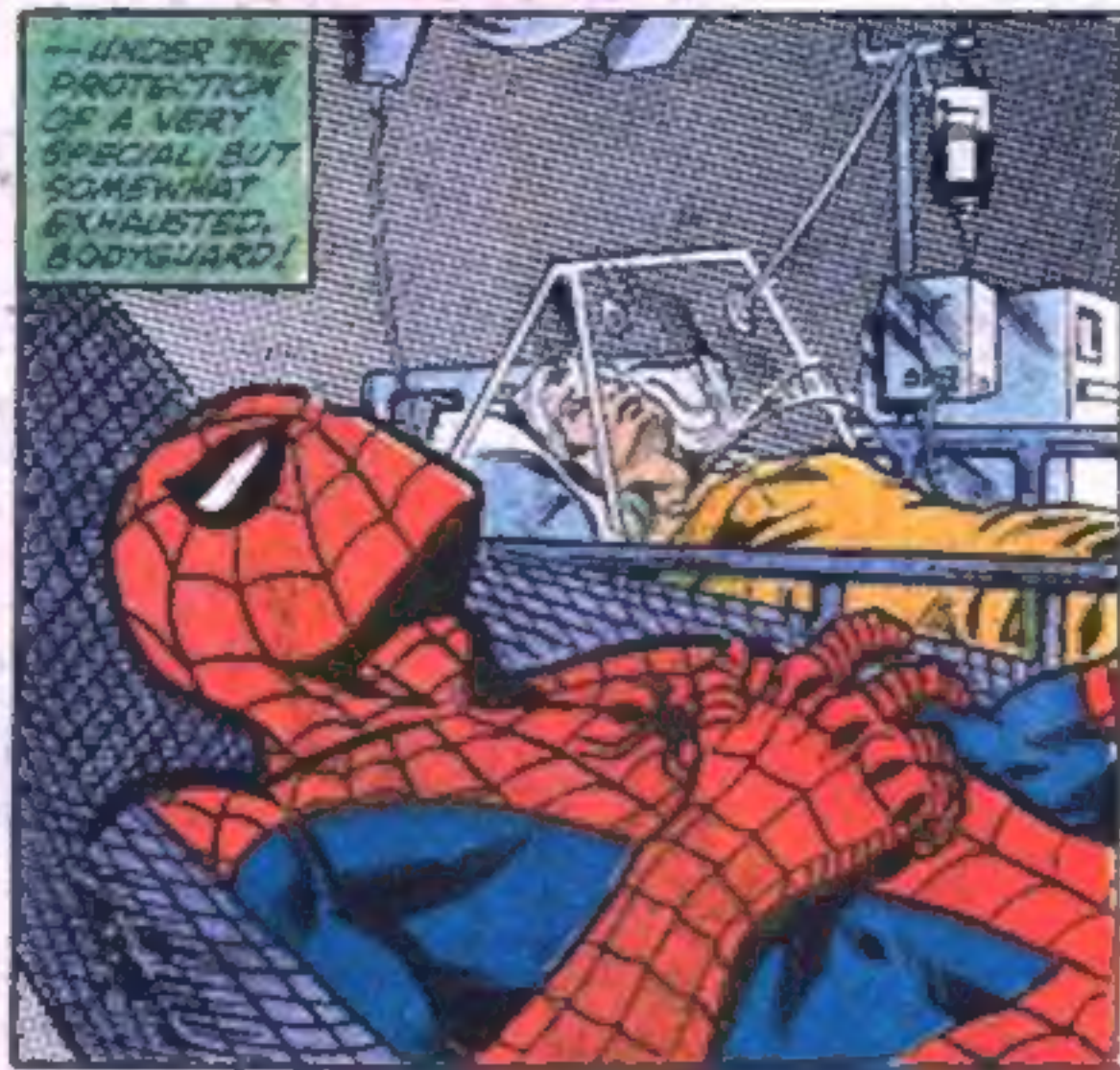


HIS DESTINATION: COLUMBIA PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL...



...WHERE A CERTAIN RELICIA HARDY RECUPERATES FROM SOME VERY SEVERE WOUNDS—

—UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A VERY SPECIAL, BUT SOMEWHAT EXHAUSTED, BODYGUARD!



SUDDENLY...

—MANNÉ  
...N-NO!







KEEP AWAY...OCTOPUS!  
\*YOU CAN'T HAVE...  
THE CAT! I WON'T LET  
YOU TAKE HER!



MEANWHILE...

I'M COMING,  
WALL-CRAWLER!

ALERTING HIM TO HIS  
PRESENT DANGER, HIS  
SPIDER-SENSE  
CONTINUES TO TINGLE--

I'LL SOON  
BE THE DEATH  
OF YOU AND YOUR  
BELOVED **BLACK**  
**CAT!**



--BUT SPIDER-  
MAN CONTINUES  
DREAMING--

I'LL...  
FIGHT YOU  
...OCTOPUS!



I'LL  
FIGHT  
YOU!





NEVER MIND, DOC!  
I SEE THAT YOU'VE  
REATTACHED YOUR  
MECHANICAL ARMS

I THOUGHT  
YOU WOULD  
HAVE LEARNED  
YOUR LESSON--



--AFTER THE  
WAY I TORE THEM  
OFF YOU THE  
LAST TIME  
WE MET!\*

DON'T FLATTER  
YOURSELF! THE LAST  
TIME WE FOUGHT I WAS  
EXHAUSTED FROM TOO  
LITTLE SLEEP--AND  
ENCUMBERED BY  
THE INTERFERENCE  
OF THE OWL!

\*SEE  
SPECTACULAR  
SPIDER-MAN  
#75!



I AM RESTED NOW--AT THE  
PEAK OF MY POWER--AND I  
MEAN TO REVENGE MYSELF ON  
THOSE WHO BROUGHT ABOUT  
MY DEFEAT.

GIVE ME  
A BREAK!  
DON'T YOU  
EVER GIVE  
UP?!



IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN, I HAVE  
THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH OF  
A SPIDER--AND I ALWAYS END UP  
PUTTING YOU AWAY!

NOT THIS TIME, SPIDER-MAN!  
I WILL HAVE MY VENGEANCE  
UPON YOU AND YOU WILL DIE--



--BUT NOT TONIGHT!  
THIS IS MERELY A  
SOCIAL CALL, A  
WARNING OF  
THINGS TO  
COME!

HUH?  
I DON'T  
GET IT!

OH, BUT YOU WILL GET  
IT, SPIDER-MAN!



AS  
WILL  
THE  
BLACK  
CAT...





...TOMORROW NIGHT!



TOMORROW NIGHT?



YES! I WANT YOU BOTH TO KNOW A NIGHT OF FEAR!

OF HELPLESS ANTICIPATION!



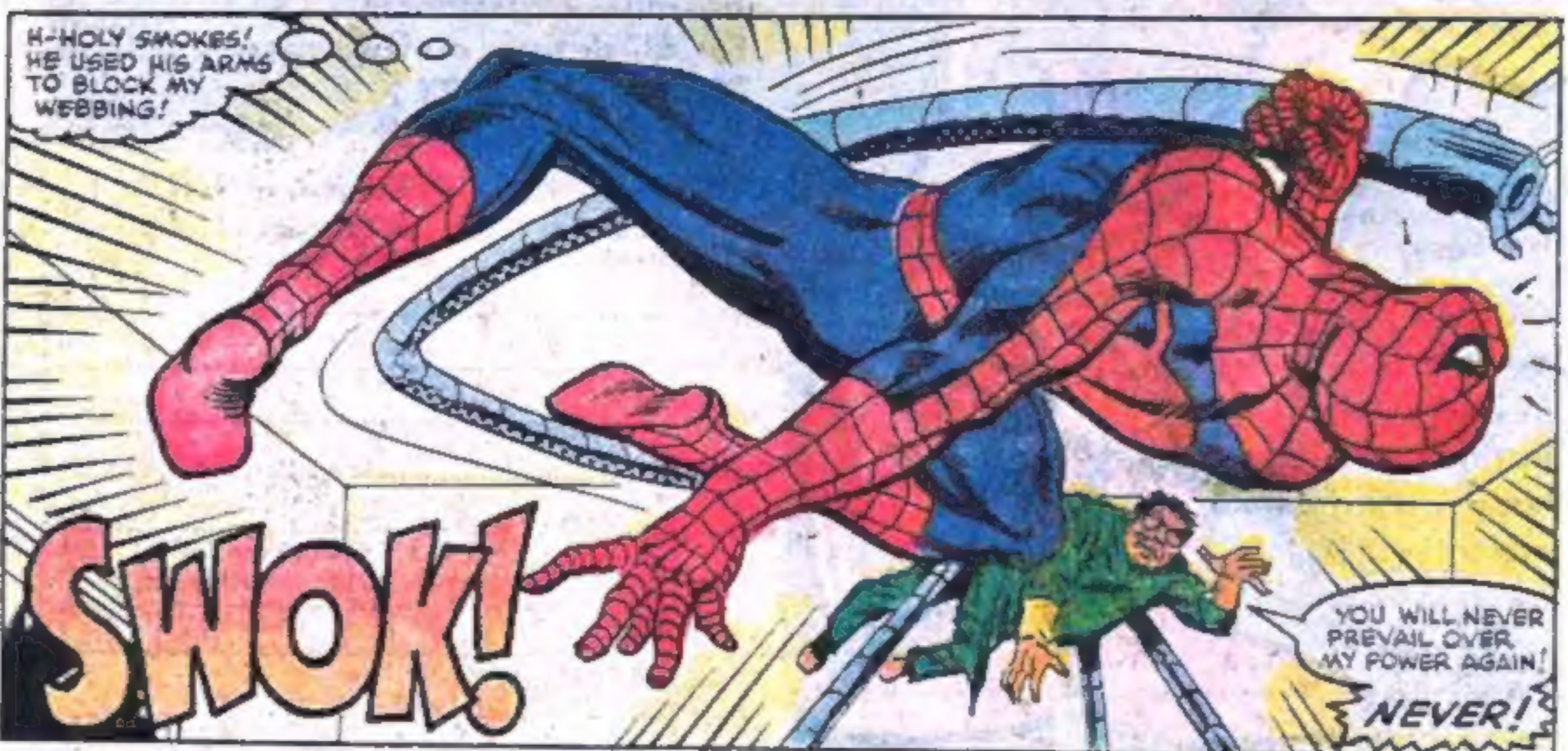
I WILL RETURN TO DESTROY YOU IN 24 HOURS--

--AND THERE WILL BE *NOTHING* YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!

NOTHING EXCEPT BEAT THE STUFFINGS OUT OF YOU-- AND SHIP YOU BACK TO PRISON-- LIKE I'VE DONE EVERY OTHER TIME WE'VE FOUGHT!



NO, SPIDER-MAN, YOUR DAYS OF EASY VICTORIES, AND FORTUITOUS TRIUMPHS, ARE OVER!



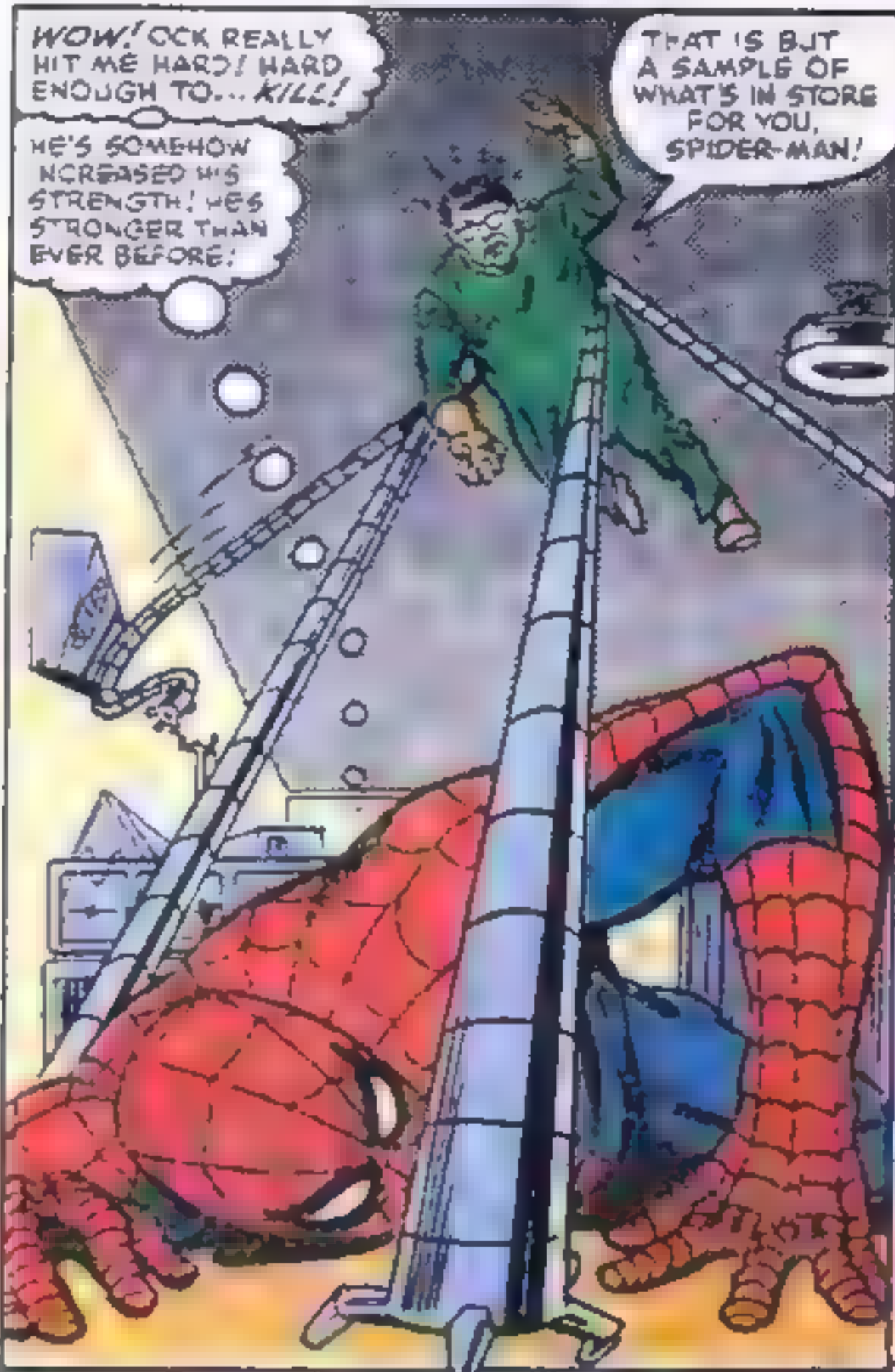
H-HOLY SMOKES! HE USED HIS ARMS TO BLOCK MY WEBBING!

SWOK!

YOU WILL NEVER PREVAIL OVER MY POWER AGAIN!

NEVER!



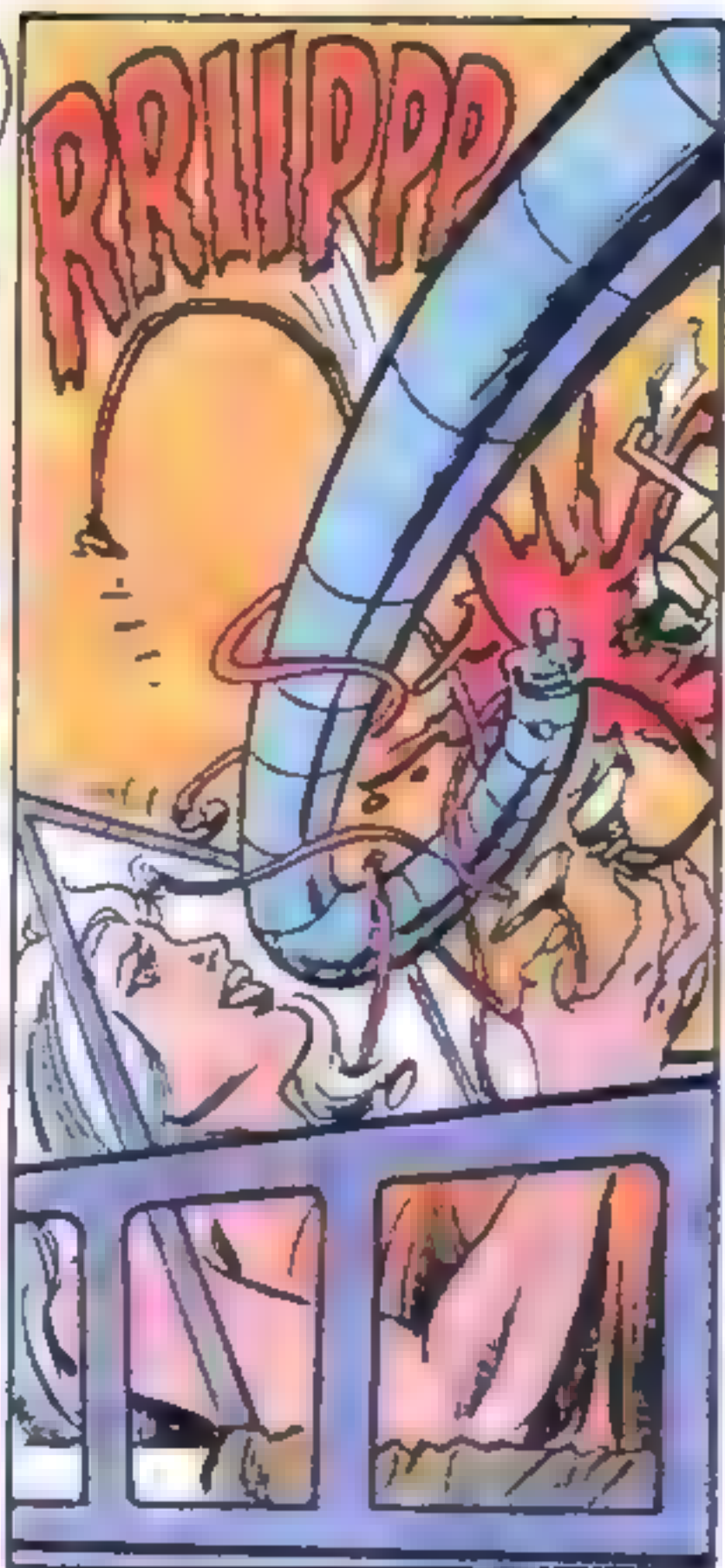


WOW! OCK REALLY HIT ME HARD! HARD ENOUGH TO... KILL!  
HE'S SOMEHOW INCREASED HIS STRENGTH! HE'S STRONGER THAN EVER BEFORE!

THAT IS BUT A SAMPLE OF WHAT'S IN STORE FOR YOU, SPIDER-MAN!



AND THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE BLACK CAT!



RRRIIPPP



THE CAT'S LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM!

OCTOPUS, YOU'LL KILL HER!



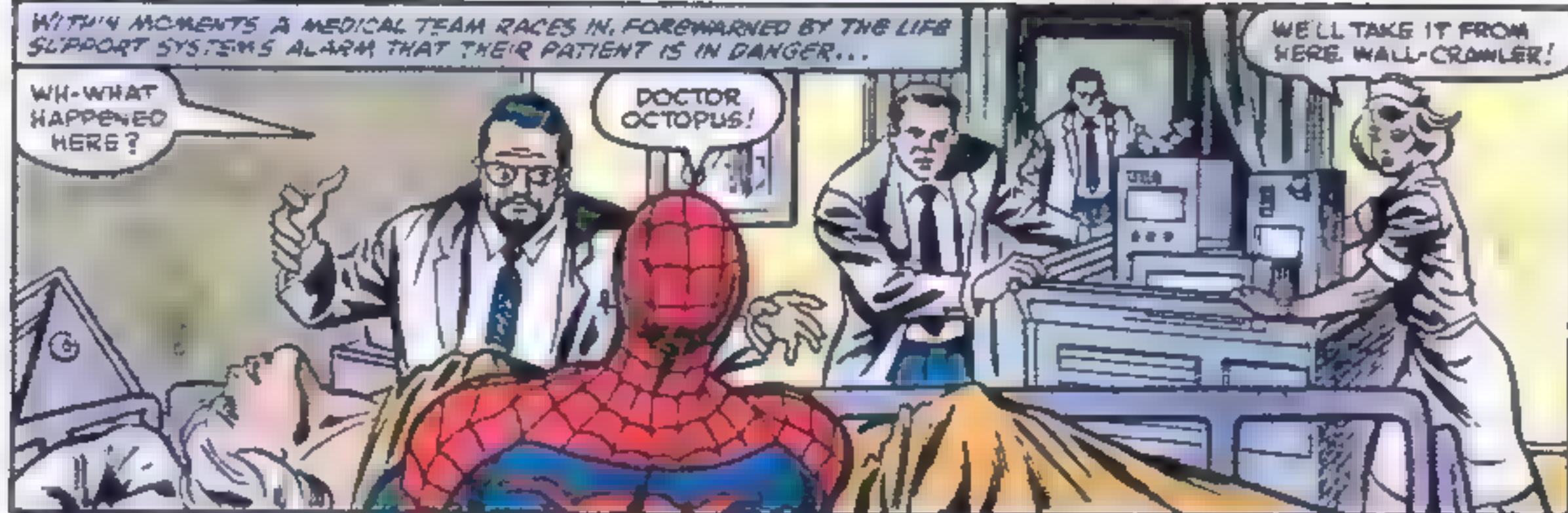
THAT'S THE POINT ISN'T IT? AN REVOIR, ARACHNID-- AND THANK YOU FOR THIS EVENING'S ENCHANTING ENTERTAINMENT.  
WHEN NEXT WE MEET, WE BATTLE-- TO THE DEATH!



REEEEEEEEEEE

CAN'T GO AFTER HIM-- NOT WITH FELICIA IN DANGER  
DOCTOR! I NEED A DOCTOR!



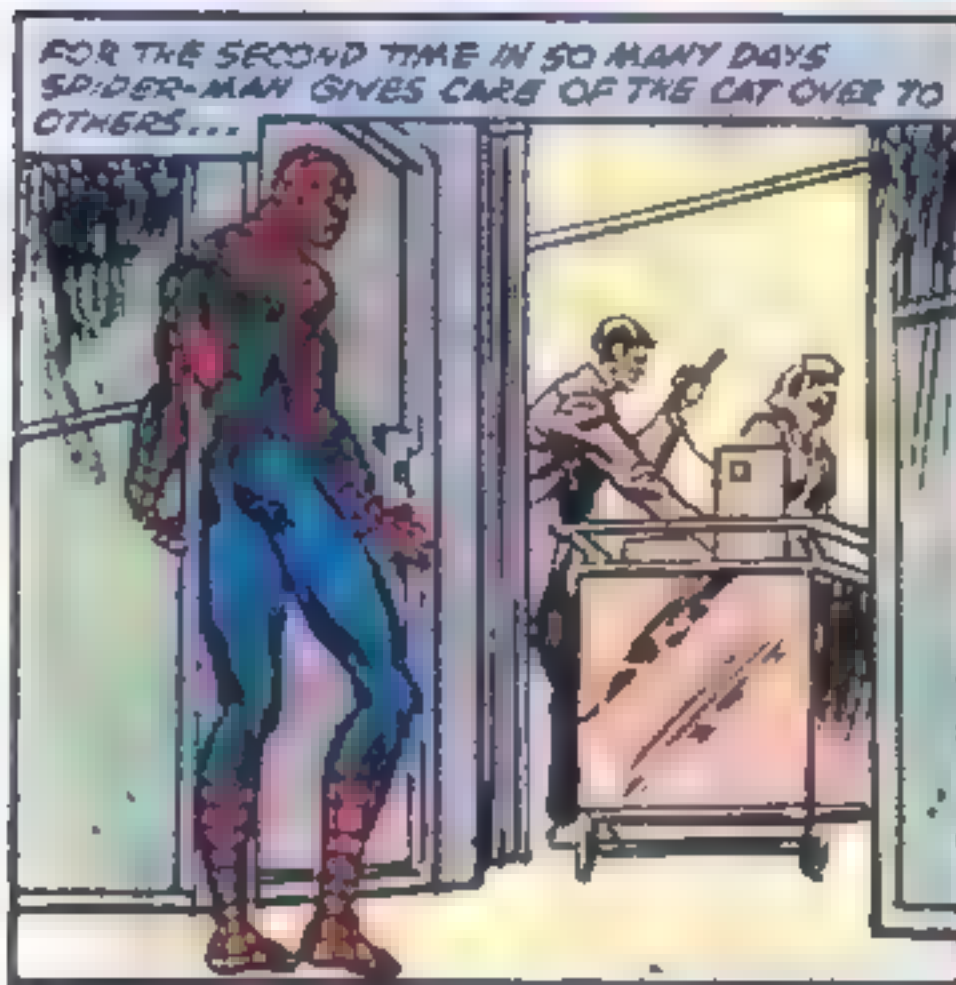


WITHIN MOMENTS A MEDICAL TEAM RACES IN, FOREWARNED BY THE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS ALARM THAT THEIR PATIENT IS IN DANGER...

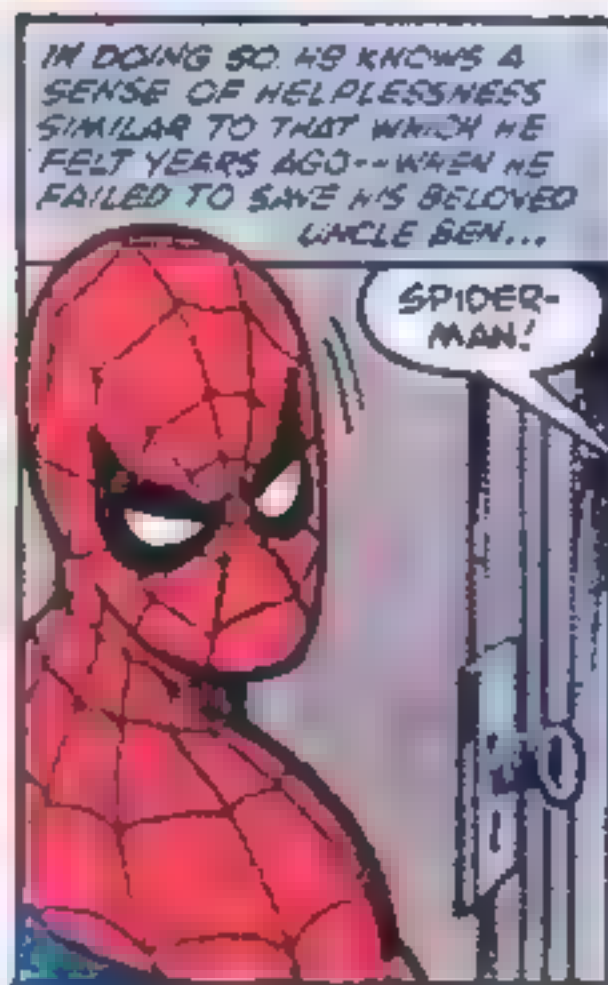
WH-WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

DOCTOR OCTOPUS!

WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, WALL-CRAWLER!

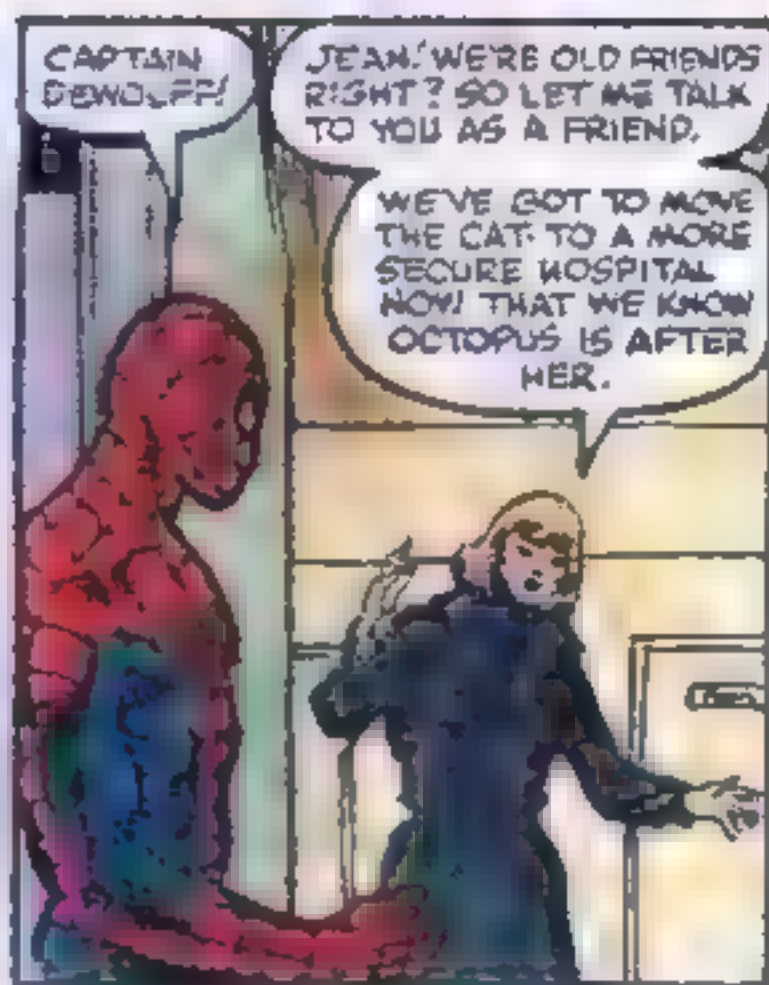


FOR THE SECOND TIME IN SO MANY DAYS SPIDER-MAN GIVES CARE OF THE CAT OVER TO OTHERS...



IN DOING SO, HE KNOWS A SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH HE FELT YEARS AGO--WHEN HE FAILED TO SAVE HIS BELOVED UNCLE BEN...

SPIDER-MAN!



CAPTAIN DENOUEP!

JEAN! WE'RE OLD FRIENDS RIGHT? SO LET ME TALK TO YOU AS A FRIEND.

WE'VE GOT TO MOVE THE CAT TO A MORE SECURE HOSPITAL NOW! THAT WE KNOW OCTOPUS IS AFTER HER.



NO! WE CAN'T MOVE THE CAT! HER CONDITION'S TOO UNSTABLE! WE COULD END UP KILLING HER OURSELVES!

BESIDES, THERE'S NOWHERE WE CAN HIDE HER FROM OTTO OCTAVIUS!

WHAT DO WE DO THEN?



OCTOPUS SAID WE'LL BE BACK TOMORROW. YOUR PEOPLE CAN GUARD THE CAT TONIGHT.

AND YOU?



ME, CAPTAIN?

I'LL BE GETTING READY FOR THE BIGGEST BATTLE OF MY LIFE!

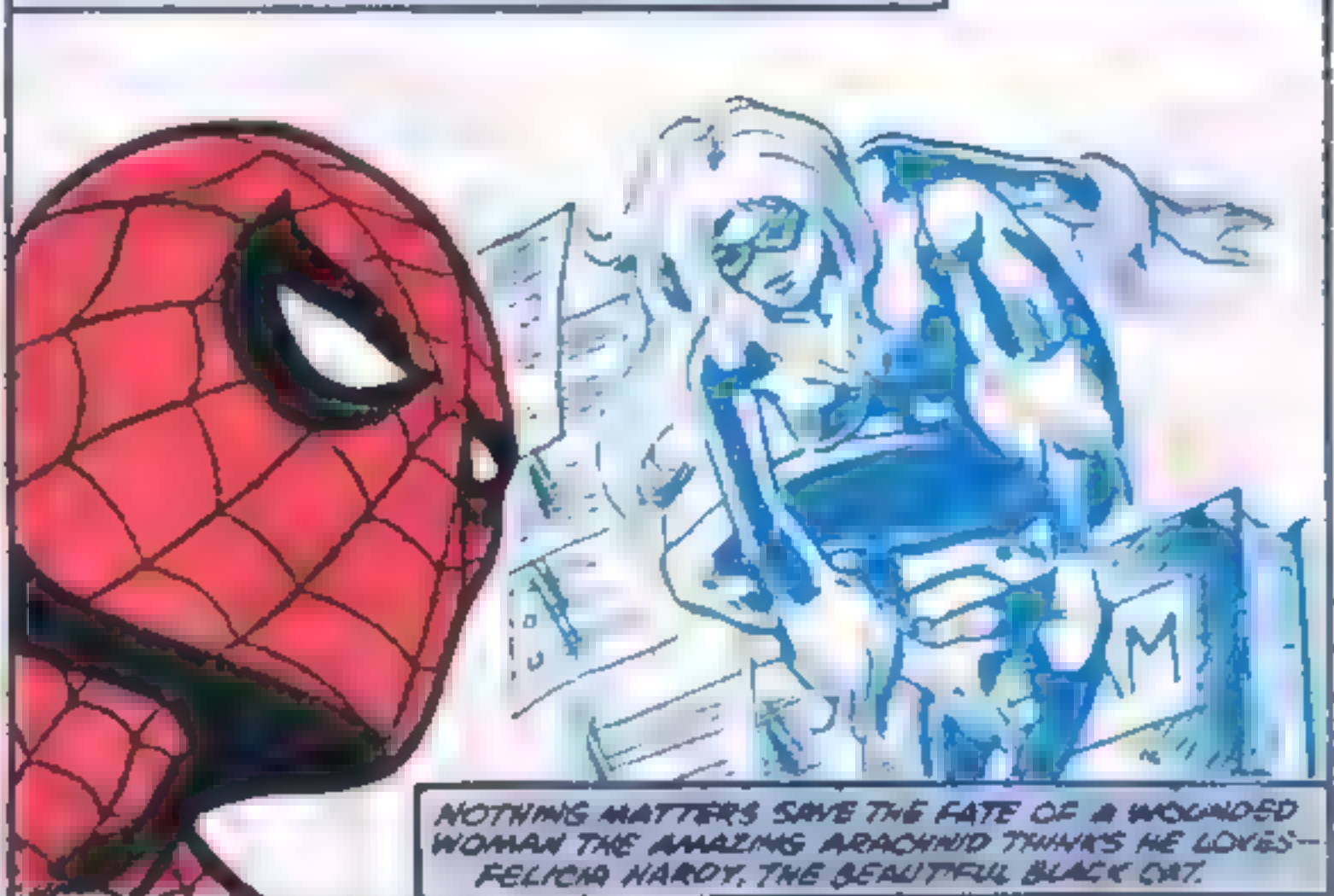


A SLENDER STRAND OF WEBBING CARRIES THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN THROUGH THE NIGHT.



BELOW HIM, EIGHT MILLION STORIES ARE BEING ENACTED BY EIGHT MILLION BEINGS.

BUT THOSE TALES ARE AS INSIGNIFICANT TO HIM NOW AS ARE HIS PHOTO WORK, HIS GRADUATE STUDIES, AND HIS CAREER...



NOTHING MATTERS SAVE THE FATE OF A WOUNDED WOMAN THE AMAZING ARACHNID THINKS HE LOVES—FELICIA HARDY, THE BEAUTIFUL BLACK CAT.

BUT LIFE HAS A WAY OF INTRUDING UPON ONE'S ISOLATION.



WONDER WHAT'S UP?

WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!

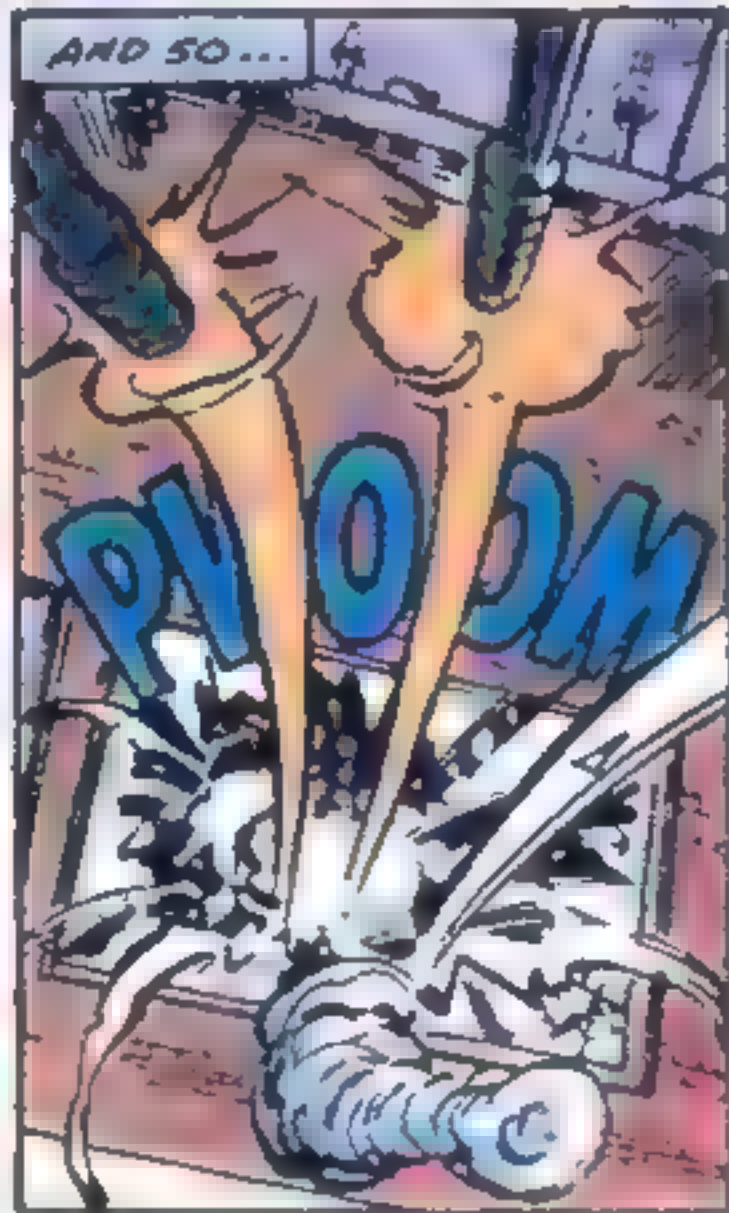


COME OUT--OR WE'LL USE TEAR GAS!



NO ANSWER...

AND SO...

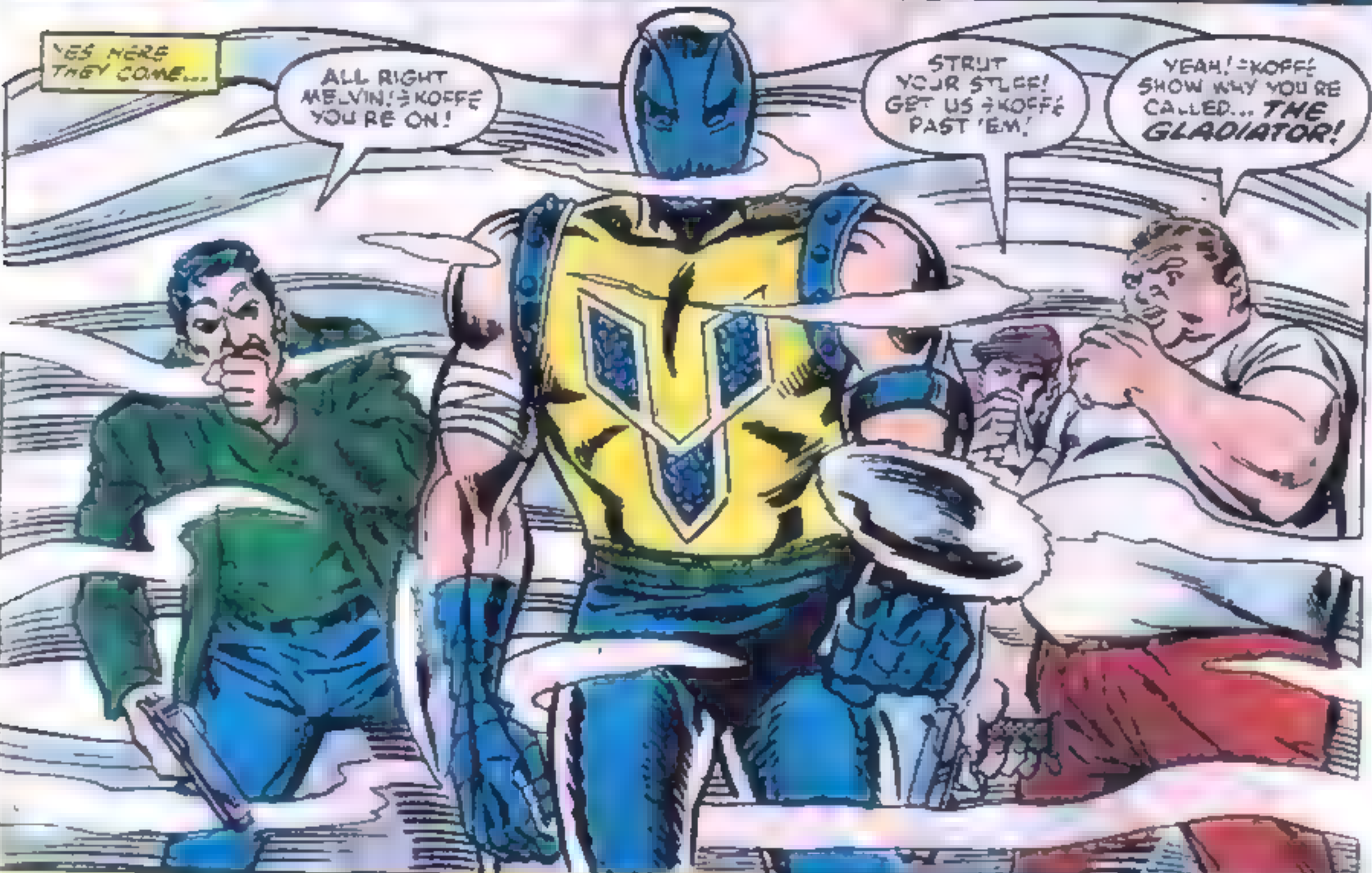






BUT THEN...

GET READY!  
HERE THEY  
COME!



YES HERE  
THEY COME...

ALL RIGHT  
MELVIN! KOFFE  
YOU'RE ON!

STRUT  
YOUR STUFF!  
GET US KOFFE  
PAST 'EM!

YEAH! KOFFE  
SHOW WHY YOU'RE  
CALLED... **THE  
GLADIATOR!**



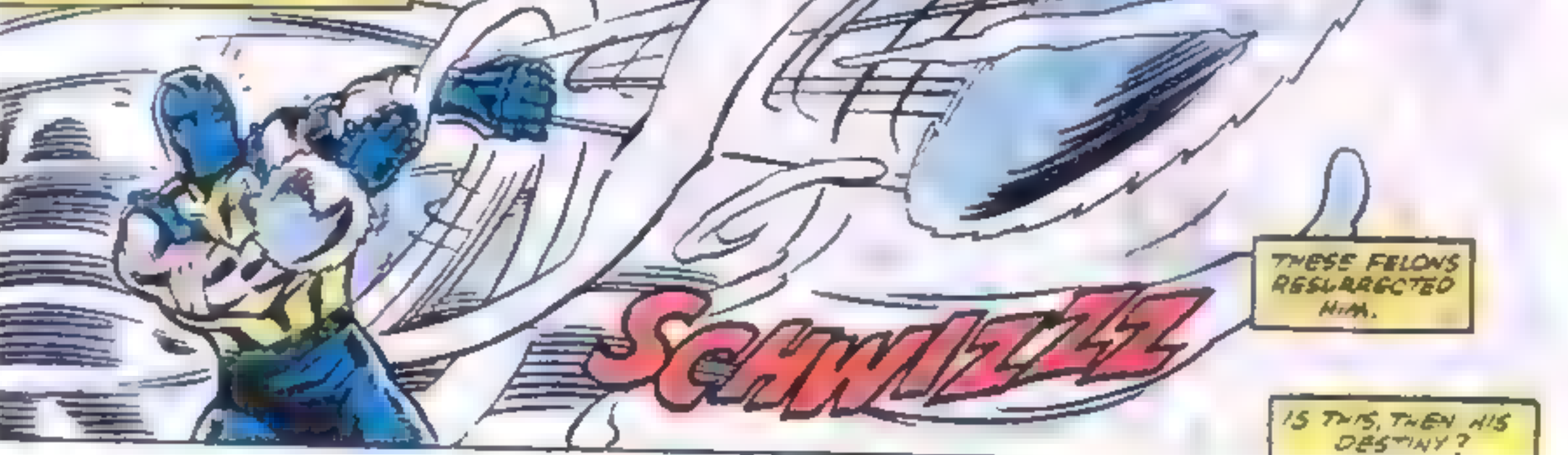
MELVIN POTTER  
HAD SHOWN NEVER  
TO DON THE  
GLADIATOR'S  
ARMOR AGAIN

QUIT  
STALLIN',  
MELVIN



YEAH! STOP  
KOFFE, PRETENDING  
YOUR HEART  
AIN'T IN THIS!

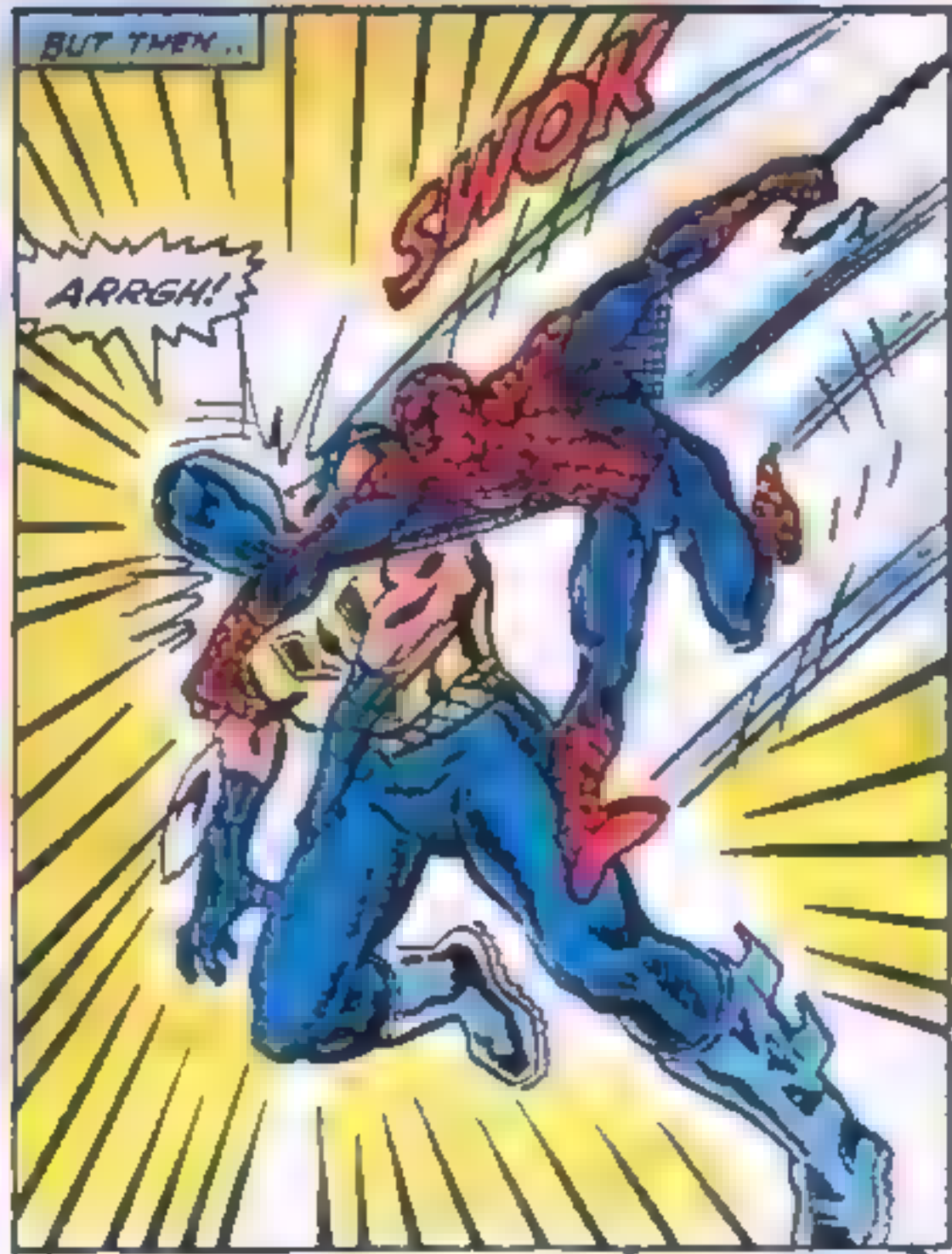
HE HAD PROMISED HIMSELF,  
HIS ATTORNEY, AND SOCIETY  
THAT HE HAD GONE STRAIGHT--  
THAT THE GLADIATOR WAS  
DEAD.



THESE FELONS  
RESURRECTED  
HIM.

IS THIS, THEN HIS  
DESTINY?

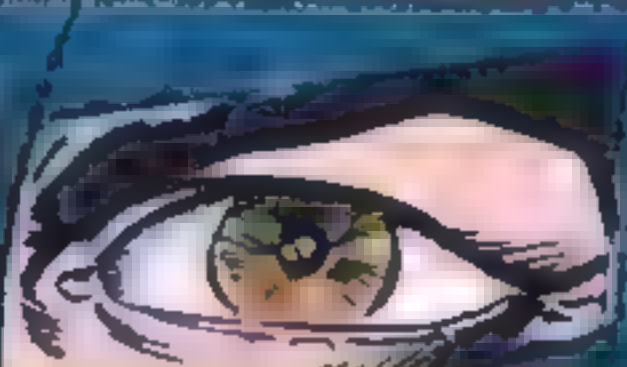
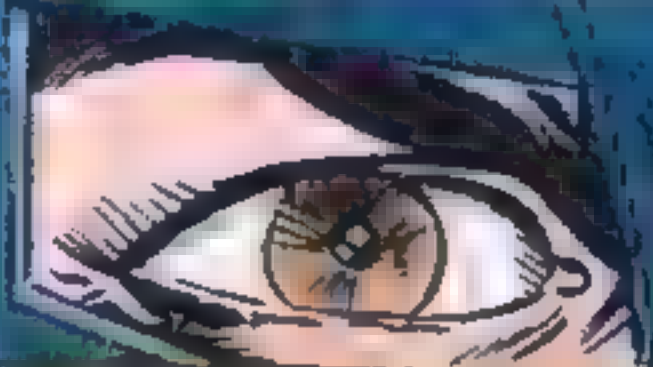








THE BLOOD POURS FROM THE BULLET-HOLE IN HIS ARM--

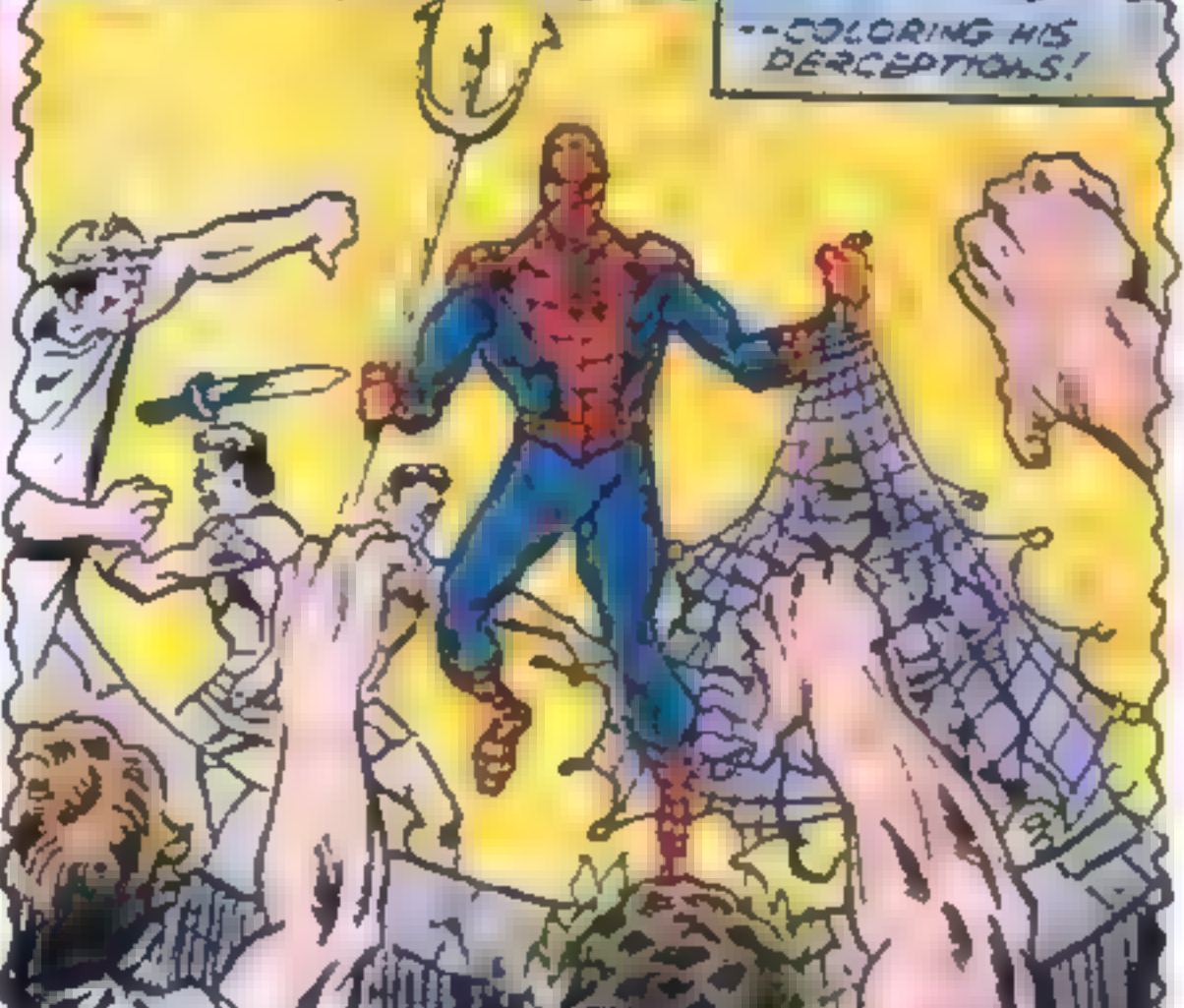


-- STAINING MELVIN POTTER'S COSTUME!

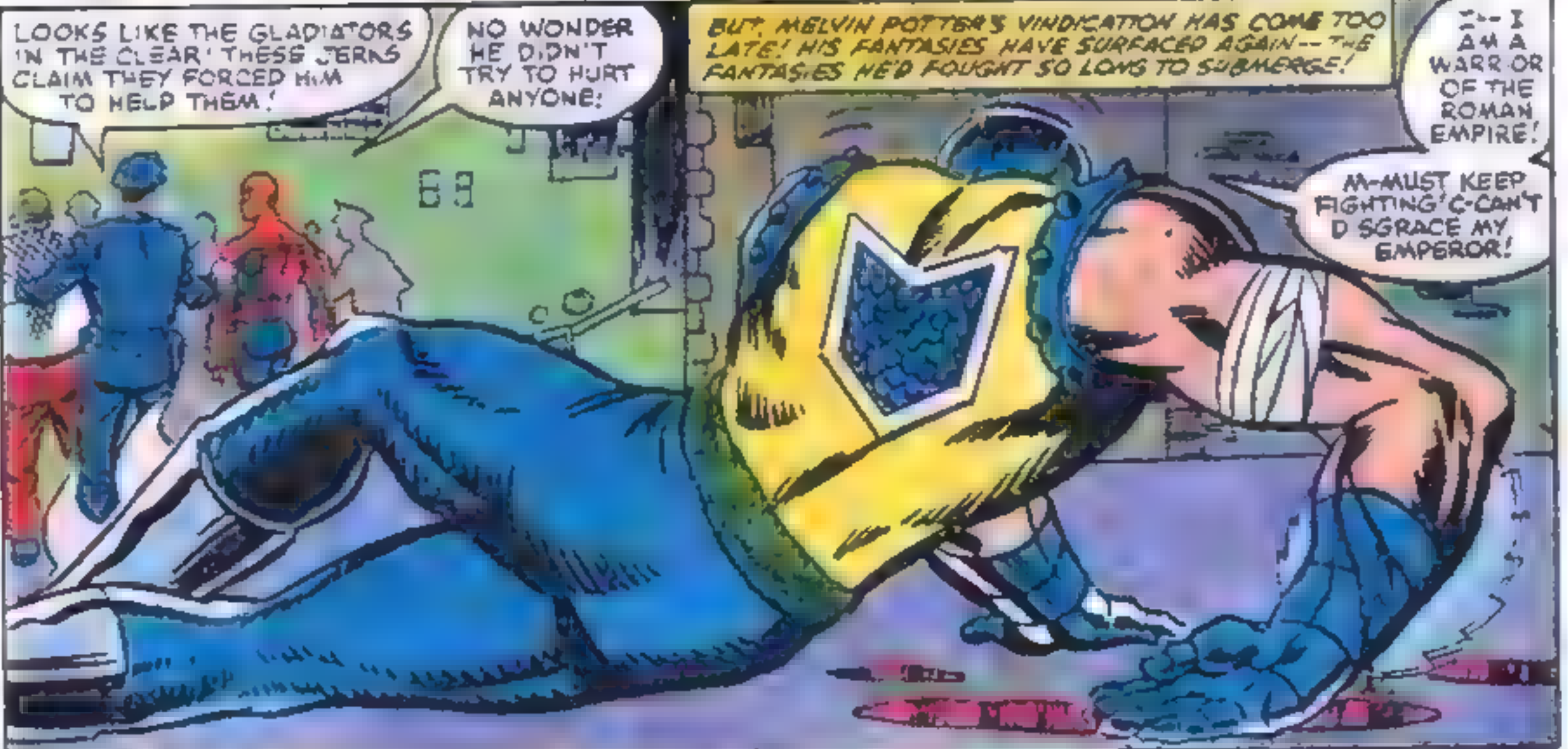
THE PAIN CLOUDS HIS MIND--



-- COLORING HIS PERCEPTIONS!







LOOKS LIKE THE GLADIATORS IN THE CLEAR! THESE JERNS CLAIM THEY FORCED HIM TO HELP THEM!

NO WONDER HE DIDN'T TRY TO HURT ANYONE!

BUT, MELVIN POTTER'S VINDICATION HAS COME TOO LATE! HIS FANTASIES HAVE SURFACED AGAIN-- THE FANTASIES HE'D FOUGHT SO LONG TO SUBMERGE!

... I AM A WARRIOR OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE!

A-MUST KEEP FIGHTING! C-CAN'T D SGRACE MY EMPEROR!



HE IS NO LONGER MELVIN POTTER! HE IS ONLY THE GLADIATOR!

HE EXISTS ONLY TO DO BATTLE... UNTO DEATH!

DANGER-- BEHIND ME!



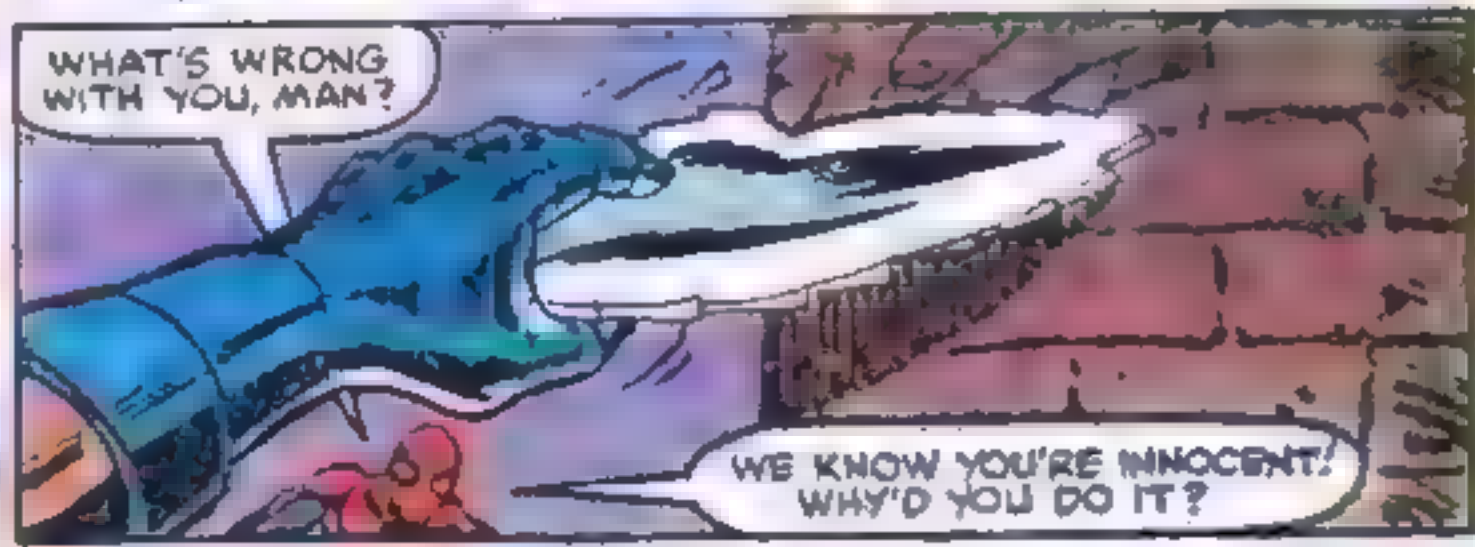
MY SPIDER-SENSE WARNED ME IN PLENTY OF TIME TO LEAP TO SAFETY-- BUT I CAN'T LEAVE THESE COPS BEHIND!

GET DOWN! HURRY!

WHAT THE--?!

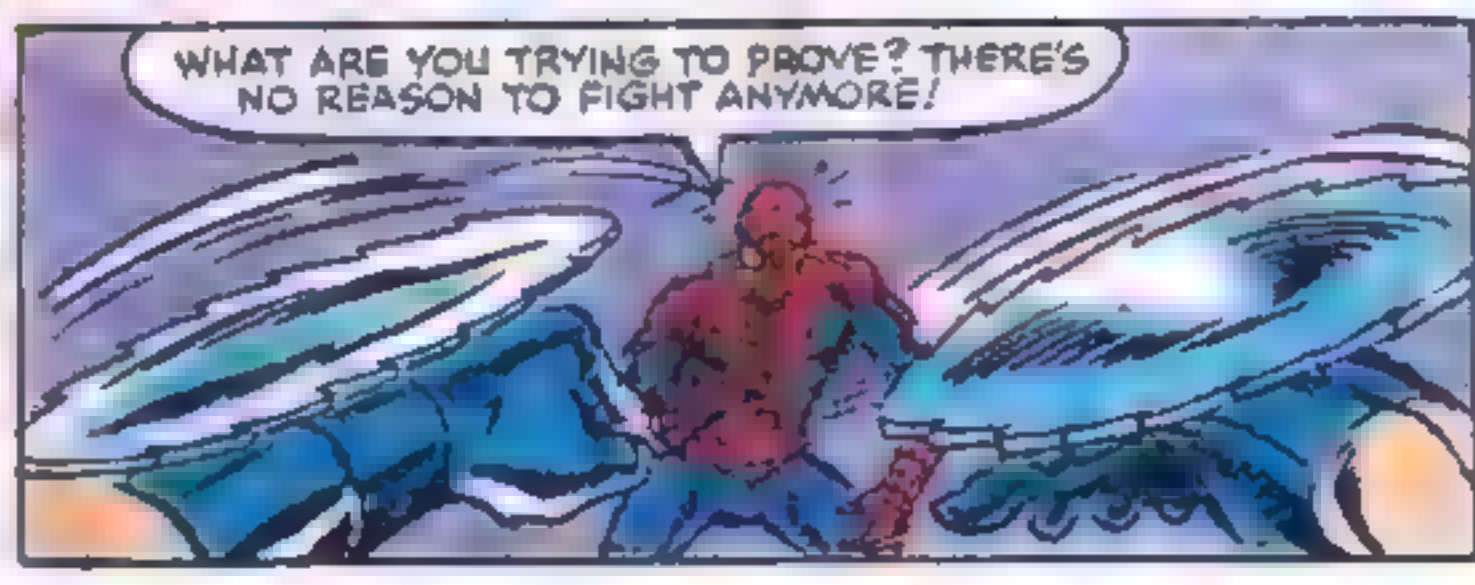


THE GLADIATOR ATTACKED ME-- BUT WHY?



WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, MAN?

WE KNOW YOU'RE INNOCENT! WHY'D YOU DO IT?



WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE? THERE'S NO REASON TO FIGHT ANYMORE!





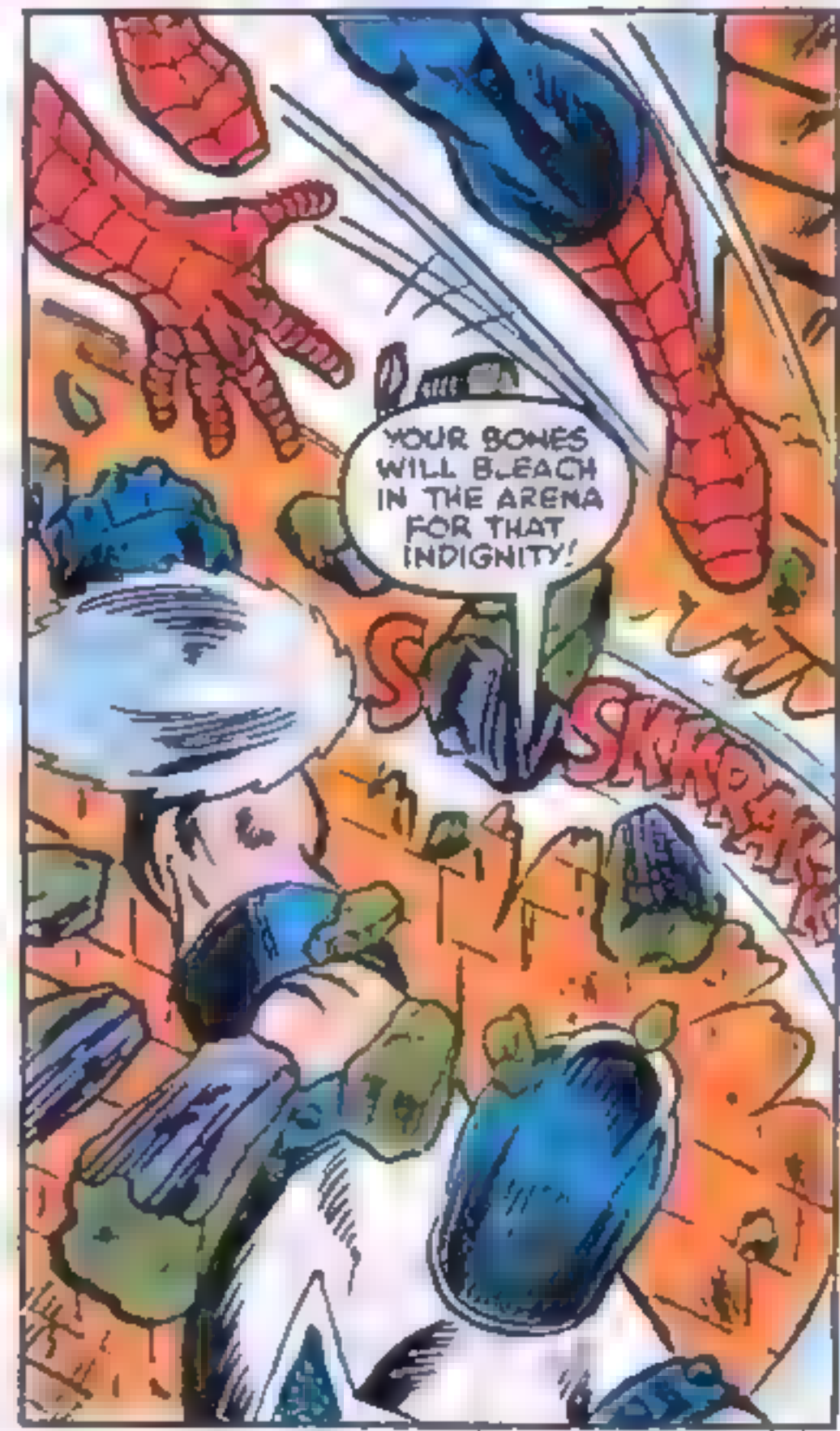
Y'KNOW SOME-  
THING, GUY, I  
REALLY DON'T  
THINK WE'RE  
COMMUNICATING  
ON THE SAME  
WAVELENGTH!

THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO  
REASON FOR US TO  
CONTINUE THIS  
FIGHT! NONE!  
ZIP-O. UNDER-  
STAND?



WHAT GIVES, YOU  
B.G. DOPE? DO YOU  
WANT TO GO BACK  
TO JAIL? THE COPS  
WILL HAVE TO TAKE  
YOU IN IF YOU KEEP  
ACTING LIKE THIS!

YOU HAVE SHAMED  
ME BEFORE MY EMPEROR!



YOUR BONES  
WILL BLEACH  
IN THE ARENA  
FOR THAT  
INDIGNITY!



EMPEROR? ARENA?

WHAT  
IS THIS...  
BEN  
HUR  
II?!



HEY, I JUST REMEMBERED  
READING ABOUT THE  
GLADIATOR! HIS LAWYER,  
MATT MURDOCK, C.A. MED  
THAT POTTER USED  
TO SUFFER FROM  
DELUSIONS--

--THAT HE  
REALLY THOUGHT  
HE WAS A WARRI-  
OR LIVING IN  
ANCIENT ROME!

I WONDER  
IF THOSE  
CROOKS SET  
HIM OFF ALL  
OVER AGAIN?

LISTEN TO  
ME, MELVIN!

YOU'RE ONLY MAKING  
THINGS WORSE!

YOU'RE NOT IMPLICATED IN ANY CRIME YET  
--BUT YOU MAY BE IF YOU KEEP THIS UP!

DON'T LET  
THESE CLOWNS  
MAKE A FOOL  
OF YOU! YOU'VE  
DONE NOTHING  
WRONG!

THROUGH  
THE POUND-  
ING IN HIS  
BARS...

...THE  
GLADIATOR  
HEARS

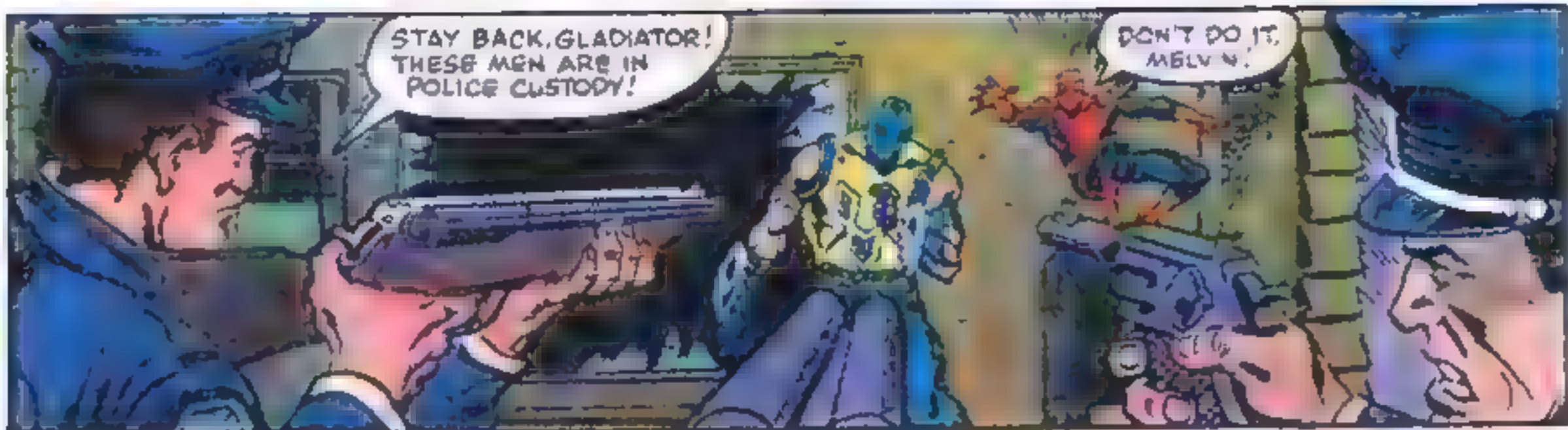
HE HEARS...  
AND HE  
UNDERSTANDS  
WHAT'S BEEN  
DONE TO HIM

UH MELVIN--?  
THEY USED  
ME! TRIED TO  
HURT ME!

OH, MY GOSH! I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK IN POTTER'S EYES

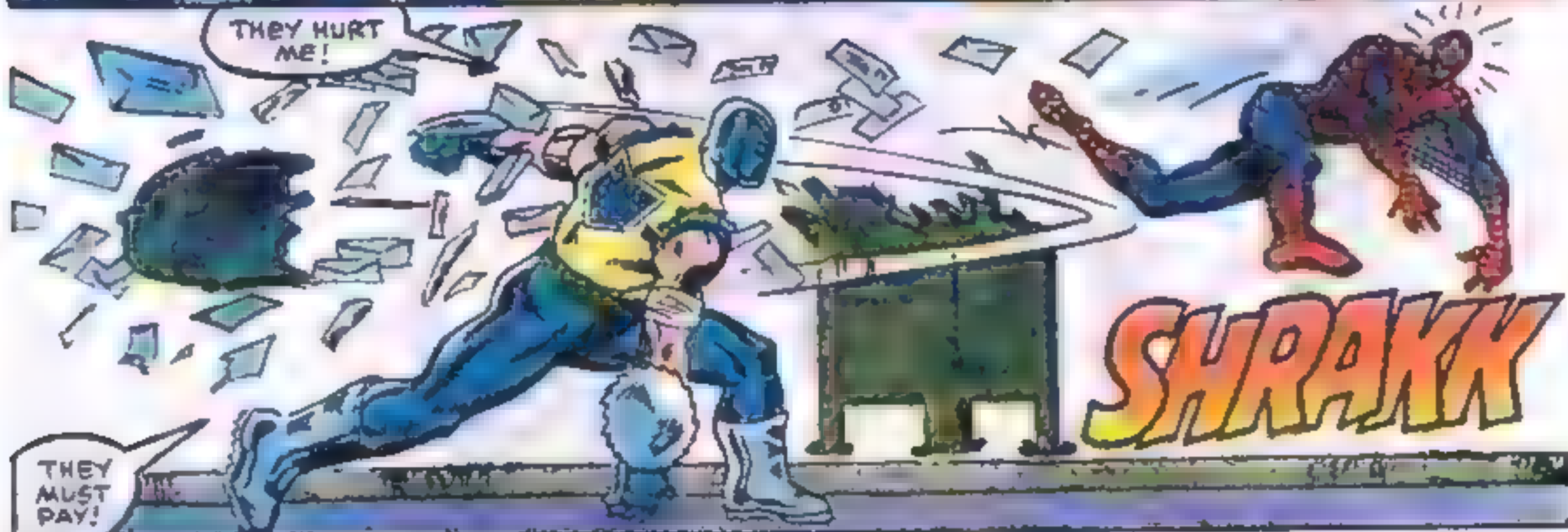
HE'S TURN-  
ING ON US





STAY BACK, GLADIATOR!  
THESE MEN ARE IN  
POLICE CUSTODY!

DON'T DO IT,  
MELVIN!



THEY HURT  
ME!

**SHRAKK**

THEY  
MUST  
PAY!



FORGET  
THEM,  
MELVIN!  
LET THE  
COPS  
HAVE  
THEM!



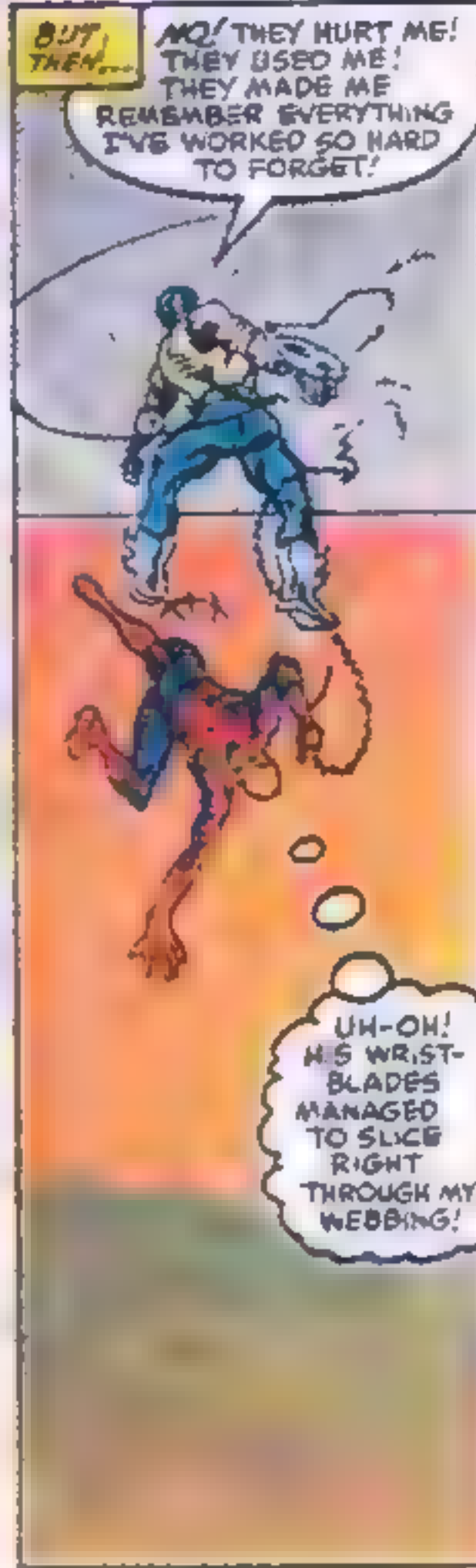
THE COURTS  
WILL MAKE  
'EM PAY

OH, NO! I'M NOT  
ANCHORED! HE'S JUST  
DRAGGING ME ALONG  
LIKE I WAS JUST  
SO MUCH  
GARBAGE!



USING HIS AMAZING  
SPIDER-LIKE ABILITY TO  
ADHERE TO ANY SURFACE  
THE WEB-SPINNER CLINGS  
TO THE STREET-- AND  
INSTANTLY STOPS THE  
GLADIATOR'S FORWARD  
PROGRESS...

DON'T THROW  
YOUR LIFE AWAY!

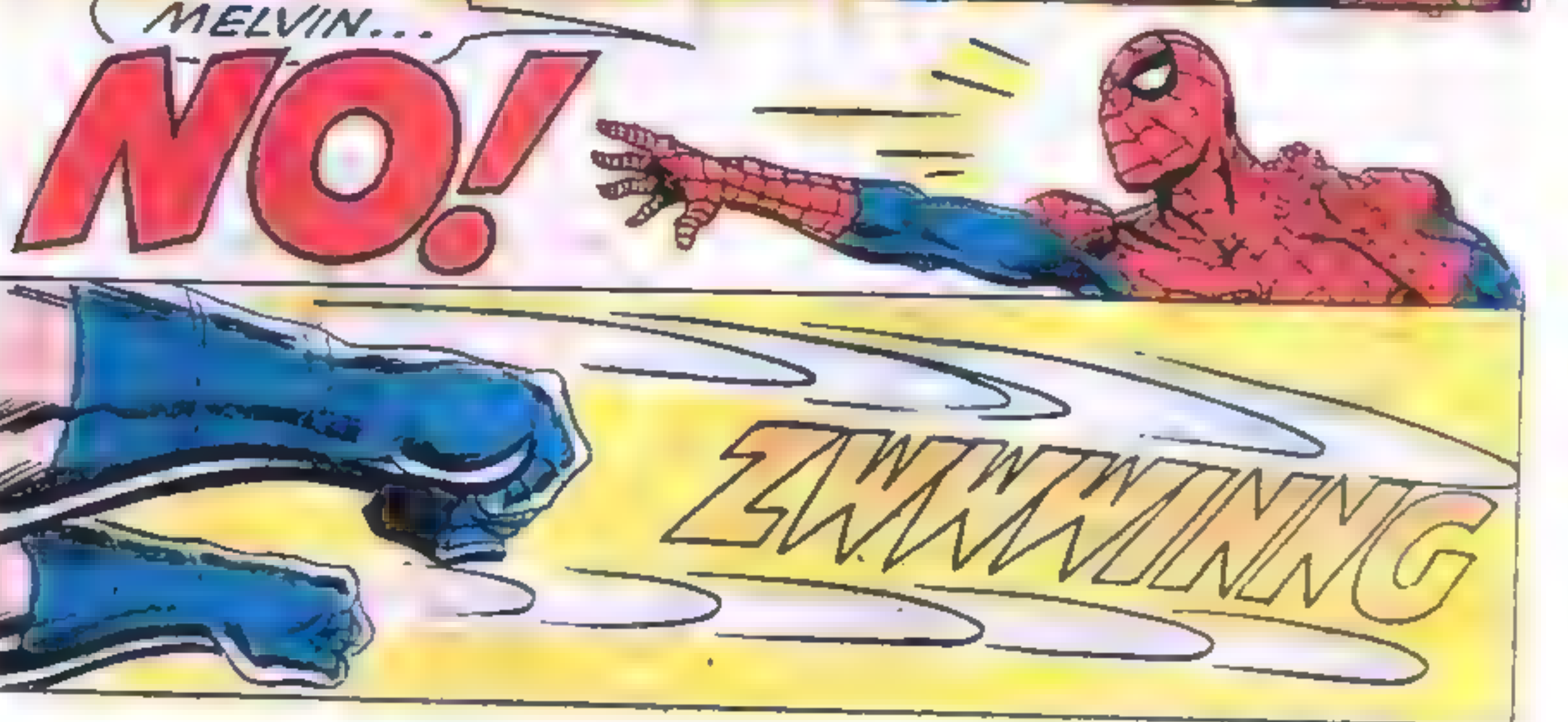
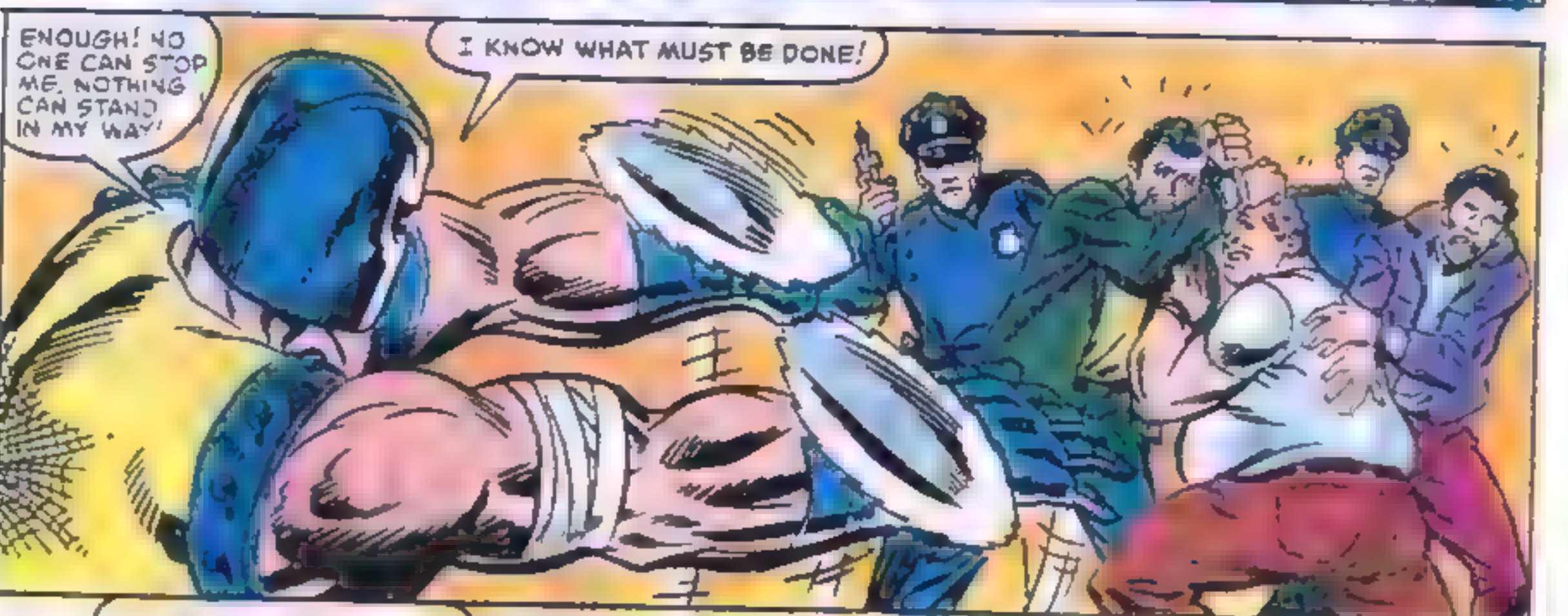


BUT  
THEN...

NO! THEY HURT ME!  
THEY USED ME!  
THEY MADE ME  
REMEMBER EVERYTHING  
I'VE WORKED SO HARD  
TO FORGET!

UH-OH!  
HIS WRIST-  
BLADES  
MANAGED  
TO SLICE  
RIGHT  
THROUGH MY  
WEBBING!







# SCHUNNING

A dynamic comic book illustration. At the top, the word "SCHUNNING" is written in large, bold, yellow letters with a black outline. Below the title, the scene depicts a physical confrontation. A man in a green shirt and blue pants is being thrown or pushed by a man in a white shirt and red pants. Two police officers in blue uniforms are present; one on the left is holding a gun, and another on the right is observing. In the foreground, there is a large, stylized white and blue object that looks like a broken piece of a car or a large wheel. The background is a solid purple color. The overall style is that of a classic comic book.

-- FROM ENDING  
MY LIFE AS THE  
GLADIATOR!

DEBT OF GRATITUDE, I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF YOU HAD NOT INTERFERED!

UH, YOU RUN A COSTUME SHOP, RIGHT? HOW ARE YOU AT REPAIRING SPIDER-SUITS?

Y'KNOW, GLADIATOR OLD FAL, THIS COULD BE THE START OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP!

AND SO, THE NIGHT PASSES..

**TOMORROW: *THE LONG GOODBYE!***



# SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAIL

MARVEL COMICS GROUP  
387 Park Avenue South  
New York, New York 10018

TOM D'FALCO  
EDITOR  
LINDA GRANT  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The letters are still pouring in on PPTSS #71 which featured the highly controversial, "With This Gun, I Thee Kill..."

The issue in that story struck many sensitive nerves. Thus, I am expanding our usual letters column this month to give more space to the many intelligent comments which centered on that story.

Dear readers, the floor is yours...

Gentlemen:

I have a son who collects your publications, and who brought to my attention your publication #71 of The Spectacular Spider-Man. He found it very impressive, and I, being in law enforcement, also found it interesting.

My initial reaction was that I could use two Spider-Man on my force. If this could be arranged I would be eternally grateful. But, if this can't be accomplished, then I'm afraid that you will be forced to contend with my comments concerning this particular issue.

As everyone knows, the issue of gun control is an extremely controversial one that has been debated from the lowest bar & grill to the floor of Congress. It is a matter of statistics that handguns, either intentionally or accidentally, cause more deaths in the United States than any other form of destruction the human race has been able to conceive. And yet, the right to bear arms is one of the most hotly guarded rights that the American public demands from the Constitution.

The issue that you published is extremely one-sided towards the control of guns. Your sensationalism towards shock brings forth a very strong message, indeed. And probably not as strong as it should be. But what is the real answer to this question of senseless slaughter and human destruction? I am a firm believer that if you take the guns away from the private citizens it will not deter the criminal element from obtaining them. Indeed, it will open up a totally new illegal market in the sale of guns for the purpose of crime and violence. Many men, much more intelligent than I, have pondered this question throughout the decades without coming up with an answer.

Again, my compliments on your attempt to view this extremely sensitive issue through this publication. I'm sure that gun clubs throughout the United States will probably also take the time to communicate their thoughts on this matter. Possibly, if God wills, an answer that everyone will be able to live with is imminent. And the key word in that sentence is LIVE!

James Kabzinski  
Chief of Police  
New Carlisle Police Dept.  
113 South Arch St.  
New Carlisle, IN 46552

Dear Tom:

I am an American teenager (a junior in high school, to be exact) and a member of the New Buffalo Rod & Gun Club. I've come to enjoy target shooting as a hobby.

Handguns aren't the real problem; it's the fact that criminals aren't punished for their crimes. Today, many criminals who commit crimes don't get caught, or, if they do, they

aren't prosecuted because they plead insanity, plea bargain for a lower sentence, or use other loopholes in the law to get off scot free. Because of the low percentage of criminals who go to prison, many criminals become confident and keep on committing crimes.

Handguns have proven themselves as deterrents of crime. Criminals will commit crimes if they think that they can get away with them. In the real world we have no Spider-Man or Fantastic Four to protect us from criminals and if we lose our right to bear handguns, we will be in even more trouble. New York has some of the strictest handgun laws in the country — and the nation's highest crime rate.

Michael Newell  
3608 Michiana Drive  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Dear Tom:

You can quote statistics about handgun deaths, and how they could be stopped by outlawing handguns. But, aren't drugs illegal?

Tor Ekeland  
72 Nettle Creek Rd.  
Fairport, NY 14450

Dear Tom & Co.,

Guns don't kill people, people kill people. Guns are not animate creatures with intelligence and ability to act. Yes, they are dangerous objects which means they should be handled with maturity and responsibility.

I abhor violence. I do not own a gun, but that is my choice. Ours is a country of freedom of choice; legislating away the possession of guns (i.e., sticking our heads in the sand) does not solve the problem. Emphasizing the responsibility of each citizen of this nation will help. We cannot solve our problems by turning them over to an already overburdened police and judicial system. We have to be responsible citizens. And should you or I choose to own a gun, we must be responsible in making that choice, in taking that action. We must be responsible to emphasize that safety is paramount in dealing with guns, loaded or empty.

The possibility of abuse is the price we pay by having freedom of choice. However, we do have the choice to act in a mature, logical, adult and responsible manner. I personally think that is more of what our founding forefathers had in mind.

Shawn Walsh  
5547 Elmer Ave.  
No. Hollywood, CA 91601

Dear Tom:

Gun control is certainly a complex issue, and luckily, the story in PPTSS #71 reflected this. Perhaps the best thing about this marvelous tale is that it took a stand and yet it didn't: An opposition to handguns and the senseless violence resulting from them was shown, but you didn't ignore the fact that criminals could still get guns if they wished and that perhaps a total ban on private ownership of handguns would not be effective. Just as in life, there are no easy answers.

I liked the fact that Spider-Man's battle at the end meant something; he was fighting

for a reason. What was suggested by Lloyd Wise in the letters page of SPIDER-MAN #224 has finally happened: Spider-Man took a positive action, in that he stopped a menace before it actually developed, i.e., before the guns were distributed and used.

David Allen  
5 Douglas Drive  
Olin, IL 62450

Dear Tom:

I simply cannot let SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #71 pass without taking issue with the whole moral of the story. "With This Gun I Thee Kill" was powerful, well-done, poignant and, I'm sure, straight from the heart... but it was also, in my considered opinion, misguided, wrongheaded, and unrealistic.

In the final panel, JJJ asks if anyone can tell him what the answer is. To my mind, the major difficulty here is not what the answer is, but what the problem is. The problem is not handguns. Handguns are tools. They do not thrust themselves into the hands of stupid fathers, nasty burglars, cheap thugs, irate store owners, or playful children, and pull their own triggers. The problem here is human stupidity. It is the people wielding them.

Passing laws against handguns is treating the symptom, not the disease. It will not keep crooks from using them, and it will not keep idiots from accidentally bumping themselves and others off... though it may put those idiots to the trouble of finding some other way to do it. Passing laws against handguns will accomplish one thing however... it will give the government all the legal handguns, and it will give the government one more way to infringe on individual freedom and dignity. I find that a scary thought...

What is the answer? Not gun control. We just need smarter, more responsible, and more moral people, that's all.

Right. That's all, Sure.

Darren Madigan  
165 Strong Ave.  
Syracuse, NY 13210

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on issue #71, "With This Gun — I Thee Kill." You have done a great public service by your efforts to alert your readers to the dangers of uncontrolled handgun availability. Something must be done stop the killing. Handgun control is a reasonable step toward stopping crime and violence in our country.

The U.S. has the highest handgun violence rate in the world. In fact, in 1979, handguns killed:

48 people in Japan

8 in Great Britain

34 in Switzerland

52 in Canada

21 in Sweden

42 in West Germany

and over 20,000 in the United States.

Each of these countries has strict handgun control laws — except the U.S.

Barbara Lautman  
Handgun Control, Inc.  
810 18th St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006



Dear Tom:

I realize that taking a stand on an issue is an important matter, and the integrity involved is laudable. However, I think that when a stand is taken in a medium destined for public consumption, such as your comic, you incur a responsibility to be as accurate as possible. You were both incorrect and less than accurate in your anti-handgun story in PPTSS #71.

On page 6 panel 3, Robbie states that only military, police, and gun clubs should be able to possess handguns. Throughout all the succeeding panels he gives no sufficient reason to justify such a presumptuous attitude. In panel 4, his statistics are questionable, but more importantly they were completely out of context. In 1981 approximately 11,000 people were murdered by a person using a handgun. The 25,000 figure represents all handguns and long gun fatalities, accidental or otherwise, and includes deaths caused by police (and other such organizations) pursuant to their legal duties. What is more important is that in the last seven years less murders were committed by people using handguns every year, even though there were more people, more handguns, and more murders in each successive year. Last year 300,000 crimes were committed by people using handguns — but how many crimes were committed overall? Those 300,000 were not by any stretch a majority of the crimes — handgun crimes were, in fact, a minority. Also, there is nothing — absolutely nothing — to suggest that in a given area, there is a causal relationship between legally owned and used firearms and an increased crime rate.

All evidence suggests exactly the opposite. Without exception, every major municipality which has banned or stringently controlled handguns has much higher rates of violent crime, as well as overall crime, than they had before their various controls were enacted.

In 1981, approximately 550 people were accidentally killed with handguns. More than 2,300 people died in 1981 just from fires caused by tobacco smokers. (Frankly, I would rather see repeated anti-smoking diatribes in your pages).

In any given year, thousands of people save lives, their own or someone else's, with a judiciously-used handgun. Thirty million Americans own fifty to sixty million handguns, and according to ammunition sales figures, they fire billions — that was billions with a "B" — rounds per year. The safety record for the shooting sports is phenomenal. More people die from accidental falls or from drowning in any given year.

Accidental deaths, whether those of a child or of an adult, are certainly a tragedy. But to suggest that a handful of deaths, and the irresponsible actions of those who allowed such things to occur, are substantive arguments for restrictive handgun controls aimed at the tens of millions of responsible firearms users, is unjust and ludicrous.

Robbie's next statements concerning constitutional rights are somewhat off

target. The one and only ruling, not four, that the high court has handed down, concerned a purely offensive item (the sawed-off shotgun) that has no conceivable purpose other than for assault. In combat terms, handguns exist as a defensive weapon used to repel a close range threat. Of course, outside of the necessities of combat, different handguns are designed for a variety of tasks — hunting, target shooting, metallic silhouette, and yes, for civilian self-defense.

As regards page 7 panel 5, better than one half of all the crimes in America are committed by repeat offenders. These people are already forbidden, by federal and state statute, from owning firearms. They do not — cannot — go to a store and legally buy them. They use a "black market" of smugglers and individually made guns. These avenues would still be available to them under restrictive codes, and, in fact, these illegal sources would get more business. The only people who would not have access to legal handguns would be the thirty plus million people who never committed a crime, yet would then have been rendered far more vulnerable. Crime is a people problem. If it were a handgun problem, Vermont or Idaho would be crime-ridden bloodbaths, rather than being near the bottom of the list in terms of crime rates.

As regards page 8, there is no such thing as a "Saturday Night Special", as any knowledgeable gun handler knows. It is just an invented problem, the old straw man argument, an avenue to attack from the flanks. The FBI's data show that crimes are just as likely to be committed by a person wielding a fine Colt or Smith and Wesson as they are to be committed by a person using a cheaper Targa or RG. As for the inset of the man cleaning his gun, that is not even worthy of comment, and not an argument per se.

J.J.J.'s final comment tells the whole story. There is no easy answer. Simply taking away guns from decent people who are guilty of no wrong-doing is very simplistic and totally unjust, not to mention unworkable. But responsible, armed, and experienced citizens are the first line of defense against the vanguard of barbarism.

Robert M. Anderson, U.S.N.  
7319-C Lobaugh St.  
Ft. Meade, MD 20755

Dear Editor:

I was somewhat annoyed with PPTSS #71. If I want to read about the pros and cons of gun control, I'll read a newspaper. I read comics for entertainment and, most of all, fantasy. If your writers and editors feel that comics should make some kind of "social contribution", perhaps they should get a job on Newsweek or Esquire, but not at Marvel.

Denis Schwendemann  
507 Third Ave. #1010  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Tom:

I don't own a handgun and I don't particularly want to. What I do want is the freedom to make that decision for myself, just as I

want to decide for myself whether to wear a motorcycle helmet or a seat belt.

A free society can never be totally safe. To have safety, one must sacrifice a certain amount of freedom, and vice versa. Give people freedom of choice and some will be a lost result. This is a hard fact that many people don't want to face. Freedom costs lives.

Is it worth the price? Well, there's probably very little chance of being mugged or killed with a handgun in the Soviet Union, but who wants to live there?

I'm not advocating anarchy. With freedom comes responsibility, and our crime problem is at least partly the result of our reluctance to hold individuals accountable for their own actions. We desperately look for scapegoats. Handguns. Drugs. Violence on TV. Violence in comic books. Poverty. Anything.

When Peter and Robbie bemoaned the death of the young armed-robber, Pete whined that he was only a "kid". So? Was he saying that 15 or 16 or whatever is too young to understand that armed robbery is wrong?

I see no real inconsistency in opposing a handgun ban on libertarian grounds and then taking a hardline attitude towards crime. The former involves freedom of choice for honest citizens; the latter involves punishing people who have violated the rights of others and, in so doing, forfeited their own rights.

I did like Bill Mantlo's sympathetic portrayal of the police. Too often, cops are portrayed as trigger-happy clods over-eager to shoot at our Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man.

Despite my mixed feelings, PPTSS #71 did, if nothing else, provide food for thought, a worthwhile accomplishment in and of itself.

Tom Crunkleton  
No Address Given

Dear Tom:

As should be expected, no answers were offered in PPTSS #71. It would be unreasonable to assume that a 21-page comic story could fully explore all sides of an issue as complicated as gun control, let alone offer any solutions. That there are no easy answers is, in fact, the only solid message carried in the story. Bill Mantlo did well in trying to show both sides of the story, and it is to his credit that the end result of the story was frustration over the complexity of the problem and sadness for all the victims. I don't know if I was alone in this, but I kept thinking that viewing the issue through Peter Parker's eyes was especially poignant due to the loss of his Uncle Ben Parker in a handgun murder.

Mike Christiansen  
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Rockford, IL 61108

My sincere thanks to everyone who has written for the many interesting and thought-provoking comments! And, thank you for letting me know you care...

Tom DeFalco

# ALPHA FLIGHT

--IS COMING THIS SPRING! 'NUFF SAID, EH?



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CONTRIBUTOR TO  
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Queries? Requests? Contact me at  
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*Pledged to scan all series great and small...*